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Christianity: A Mission of Doctrine

A SERMON

PREACHED IN CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

AT THE

CONSECRATION OF THE BISHOP OF BARBADOES

ON ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S DAY, 1873

BY

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Matth. xi. 2–6.

"Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

THE criticism (if we may use the expression) on the character of John the Baptist, which our Lord gave to the bystanders in the narrative which follows, seems to show that this question of the Baptist was not merely intended to gain information for himself or for his disciples, but was the utterance of a momentary scepticism, a fretful wish that He who was doing so many miracles would not forget that His forerunner was a prisoner for conscience sake in the dungeons of Herod's fortress. And our Lord's pursuit of His own line of duty, without interposing to rescue John, His allowing John's life to close and his work to cease, without a miraculous providence to prolong his life and make use of him as one of His own missionaries, is an instance of that stern "irony" of Divine Providence by which the missionary is allowed to pass away prematurely, the soldier of truth allowed to drop early in the day of battle, an instance of that

prodigality in the moral world so abundantly seen in the physical, which attests at once the mystery and the absolute generality of God's plan of government.

If this be the meaning of the narrative; if St. John's question was caused by a moment of passing scepticism and religious fretfulness; if his death was an abrupt extinction of a precious voice witnessing for truth and righteousness; then both the one and the other become parables describing the traits of thought and life which are repeated from age to age in the lives of Christian ministers and missionaries, and in the mind of the Christian Church at all times, as she surveys from a distance her missionary work. There are moments when either the long-continued strain of personal suffering or the despair arising from the collapse of religious work around, causes even devoted servants of Christ to stagger at their post in the great battle of good against evil, and to despair of the present victory of the cause for which they are struggling. The desponding scepticism of the old preacher—"This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all. There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not,"[1] gives expression to this dark hour of temptation. There are moments when the Church of Christ is so saddened by the defeat of religious

[1] Eccl. ix., 3, 2.

efforts that it is for a moment panic-stricken with surprise.

It is on an occasion like the present that such meditations, arising naturally out of the festival for the day, may not be wholly unfitting. A son of our Church is before us, about to be dedicated to the life-long work of directing the Churches of one of our distant settlements; sent as a missionary bishop, not indeed to the foreigners or to the heathen, but to the children of the English "dispersion." At such a time it might be sufficient to offer to him, and to those related to him in the nearness of affection, the expression of our congratulations and our pious hopes. The hour is sufficiently moving, sufficiently suggestive of emotion to those who have long numbered him among their friends, to render this task most consonant to their feelings. Some of us who are here this day, have come from a distant part of our land in order to testify by our presence to the deep and affectionate respect in which he is held in the city of his birth and of his early education. Some of us who had the happiness to know his life of intelligent industry and conscientious study at Oxford, feel it a pleasure to raise the veil which conceals the feelings of private affection, and, in bidding him adieu, recall the hours spent together years ago in a University for ever dear to us. But we must lay aside reflections so personal and private. Another task lies before us; we must rise to the consideration of some subject of general

usefulness which may furnish a few suggestive lessons to us all.

The question which I would have us ask ourselves is this:—Is the cause worthy for which our friend goes forth? Can we justify, not merely officially and formally, but to our consciences and in very truth, the act of this day? Are missionary labours of real value? What is it to which we point as especially constituting the treasure of truth which bishops and their clergy carry forth to our colonies or to the heathen? I doubt not that to us here assembled, such questions may seem unnecessary. Yet in an age like this, when every act and every course of Church action is freely challenged, when in weariness with resisting the pertinacious criticism which assails every part of our common Christianity, we are sometimes ready to show the Baptist's momentary scepticism, the answer to such questions may not be useless.

We are often asked by others,—reflection may sometimes have insinuated the doubt for a moment into our own hearts,—whether Christianity is any longer worth spreading in the world; or, if it be, whether direct efforts, independent of the natural spread of a Christian civilization, are commendable. A strange misgiving has taken hold of men in reference to the value of Christianity and of missions. We are told, forsooth, that now that the World has been placed in our minds in its true position in the universe of space, and human

history diminished to its true perspective in time, and Christianity, with the Semitic religion of which it is an offshoot, has been brought by means of the comparative study of religions into its true relation to other creeds, and seen to be superior to them in degree, but hardly different in kind, and the credibility of its assertions and the authenticity of its documents invalidated by historical criticism, and the genesis of its religious ideas laid bare and the steps of their progress detected by means of philosophical analysis, and their true meaning indicated by the spirit of our literature,—when Christianity, too, has ceased to assert its unique supremacy by conceding frankly that the heathen are not wholly perishing,—we are told, I say, that we have no longer a right to assert a monopoly, hardly a superiority, for Christian truth; our enthusiasm for diffusing Christianity becomes unreasonable, and we ought to give place to faith in the gradual amelioration introduceable by the civilization founded on commerce and culture.

Now, brethren, admitting that we who are gathered here are stimulated to adhere to our profession by Christian love; yet have we faith—faith in our work, faith in the doctrines of our religion? Have we hope—hope of its success, confidence in its victory? The fact of our gathering together spares us the trouble of looking at the question in a controversial point of view, and leads us to hope that the restatement of some well-

known truths, which might hardly convince an unbeliever, may nevertheless chase away our doubts, and raise our courage, and give moral strength to him who is entering on the responsibilities of a new sphere, and to us who remain at home to carry out our pastoral warfare in retired fields of labour.

We do not want to ask whether the diffusion of Christianity has been a success; but what do we believe has been the cause of the success? What is the essence of our religion which makes it so dear to us? What is that on which we build our own hopes for this world and another, on which we found our hopes of usefulness at home, and which we so much desire to make known to the world? What is that which we point to as the stay of missionary labour? Is it Christianity as an *institution?* or Christianity as a *ritual?* or Christianity as a *life*—a *rule of ethics?* or Christianity as a *doctrine?* For Christianity comprises all these. Which is it that is its essence? Which makes it the heaven-sent remedy for the world? Which is it that constitutes the indubitable certificate to its permanence for all time as satisfying the deep heart-yearnings of a weary world? The question may seem stale, possibly absurd, by its very generality; yet in no age, perhaps, has it been more important, for the sake of our own usefulness, to have a clear conception on this point; in no age have the materials been so fully offered

for its answer by the advance of knowledge and the experience of Church history.

1. Christianity, we say, is an *institution*. Is it this that we care to spread—a kingdom of heaven on earth?

It is the more important that we look this question in the face, because in our day, from various causes, this aspect of Christianity has been so greatly insisted on. We meet with men who may have misgivings about the truth of Christian dogma and may despise Christian ritual, who nevertheless loyally admit the social value of the Christian church as a league of brotherhood, as an embodiment of a social ideal; or, again, we meet with Christian men who, under the pressure of objections about doctrine or ritual, take refuge in this aspect of Christianity, and insist mainly on its being a great educational institution for training and elevating the human race, who stake the future of Christianity on this fact alone; or, again, we meet with Christian believers who take a more sacred view, and hold so loyally and strongly the doctrine of the "holy Catholic Church," that they well-nigh seem to let the corporate and ecclesiastical view of Christianity mask other aspects of it, and, in teaching that men come to Christ through the Church, well-nigh forget that it is equally true that in another way men may be said to come through Christ to the Church.

Now, it would plainly belie the facts of history

(to use no other argument) if we were to deny, or even depreciate, the happy influence of Christianity as a corporate society, as an institution. In the early centuries wherein it was gradually gathering to itself the heathen population of the Roman empire, the Churches were so many *nuclei* of social and elevating influences, so many spots from which radiated a purer morality and a healthier civilization. And in the present day, in countries where Christianity has to make headway against a fixed system of caste, as in India, it is impossible to over-estimate the social value of Christian Churches in offering a brotherhood in which converts who forfeit caste with their change of creed may find refuge. The ecclesiastical history of the plantation colony of Barbadoes itself offers an instance to our purpose which, at the risk of being prolix, I will venture to name. It is just ninety years ago[1] that the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel needed to be reminded by Bishop Porteous that it ought to teach Christianity to the slaves who worked upon its own property, the Codrington estates in Barbadoes. It will hardly be now believed that the committee, after due consideration, refused the proposal. Even that excellent society was so benumbed by the religious torpor which at that time spread over the Church of England, that it allowed a base political expedience to restrain it from its missionary duty. What was the result?

[1] Perry's 'History of Church of England,' iii., 487.

Can we wonder that when missionaries went from Nonconformist communities to do boldly the work which the Church neglected to do, and carried the message of the great salvation to the black population of the West India islands, the slaves heard gladly that there was a society on earth open without restriction of caste or colour, a message of love from the sky to those who knew nothing but cruelty from their earthly masters, a brotherhood where there was but one Master in heaven, and they all brethren. While I doubt not that it was the message of the love of Jesus which touched the hearts of the negroes, it was doubtless the sense of freedom and brotherhood, offered in the Christian congregation, which ensured their life-long sympathy. Historical instances like these sufficiently attest the value of Christianity as an institution, of the Christian Church as a society; but is it on this account that we seek to spread it? No, my brethren. It is not because it is a society merely, but because it is a divine society; not because it is a training for the world, but because it is a training in truth that it becomes the civilizer of the world. Other brotherhoods have been formed for influencing the world, *e.g.* the philosophical league of Pythagoreans, five centuries before Christ, in the cities of South Italy; the great Church of Buddhism, in the valley of the Ganges, a few years earlier; but that which distinguishes Christianity is that it is not merely a kingdom obedient to the laws of

human progress and civilization, but a "kingdom of heaven" on earth. Its strength is elsewhere. Its life comes from the supernatural. It is divine, not merely in its aim and results, but in its meaning and source. Its glory and power lie not in the temple, but in the Shekinah which dwells therein.

2. If, then, the value of Christianity does not lie in its providence for the social instincts of man, can it be that it lies in the appeal to the imagination? If it be not a mere institution, is it a *ritual?* Who shall deny the potency of this principle? Who can deny that Christianity has ever been marked by it? Though never characterized like heathen creeds by merely external rites, its spirituality has ever (except in some moment of Iconoclasm) intertwined itself by an instinctive relationship with the highest forms of art; and if in earlier times it was shy in summoning to its service those Fine Arts which appeal to the eye, yet from its birth it made use of those two which address themselves to the higher powers of man, *viz.* music and poetry. Its prayers and its hymns are the index of its life and feeling in all ages, the outburst of the heart's deepest pleadings. What is our own Prayer-book? the collection of the treasures of prayer of many ages of the Church. A vehicle of education indeed; but why? because it embodies the sighs of penitence, the mutterings of need, the exulting love of the

God unseen. The prayers and songs of Christendom show man lifted above the things of sense, imagination elevated to the verge of the sublime; this world is felt to be a type of the world invisible. Is it, then, that this ritual has been the purifier of the world, that it is in the civilizing influence of ordinances, in the dramatic character of Christian ritual that we are largely to find the educational influence by which the Christian society has trained the world? Find the answer by asking those who in former times or the present have set the greatest value on the imaginative side of Christianity, on its music, its poetry, its ritual. Ask them whether they value ritual for its own sake, or ritual as the expression of doctrine; and you will find that they will disclaim the calumny of being ecclesiastical milliners, artists to provide for the religious imagination. Ask them what they mean by a colour or a garment, and they will tell you that these have no meaning save as symbolizing a spiritual office, a spiritual idea. Ask them what means a rite, even the most solemn and formal of all rites, the office of the Altar, and they will tell you that it means little, except so far as it commemorates Calvary or as it repeats Pentecost. No! The strength of ritual is elsewhere. It is rooted in doctrine. Prayer and ritual may be, have been, the cause of culture, but only as the index of belief, the witness to faith in doctrine, the embodiment of faith in

act, according to that sententious utterance, "Lex credendi, lex supplicandi."

3. If, then, the power of Christianity lies not in its being an institution nor in its being a ritual, perchance it lies in its being a lofty system of *Ethics*, a faith embodied in life; a faith in ideas rather than in facts, a yearning after the spiritual present or future; not merely a faith grounded on antiquarian investigations into supposed historic facts. Christianity, it is true, is a lofty system of Ethics; and without wishing unduly to depreciate the "saints" (as they are sometimes called) of heathendom, a Sakya Mouni, a Socrates, a Marcus Aurelius, or in our own time a Chunder Sen;—we Christians may point to a long list of holy men of all ages and Churches who have shown not merely, as these, the appreciation of a high moral ideal, nor merely impotent attempts to gain the mastery over their lower nature, but who have proved by their conduct that Christianity had verily changed them mysteriously from bad men to good ones, and whose lives were God-like examples of self-sacrifice. But ask those Christian men: whence their victory and their purity came; and they will answer, like the saints arrayed in white of the apocalyptic vision, that they had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb; that their righteousness was not from imbibing any mere stream of earthly influence setting towards righteousness, but in very truth was the righteous-

ness of Jesus infused into their hearts by the Spirit of Christ, a new creation in Christ, a product of the doctrine of Christ.

4. What, then, have we at last come to the conclusion that the soul of Christianity lies in its *doctrine?* that its educational influence as an institution depends on its fidelity to doctrine; that its power as a ritual depends on its foreshadowing doctrine; that its power as a rule of life is rooted in doctrine? Yes, my brethren. Obsolete and now ridiculed as the view may seem to be, here we must take our stand. It may seem startling. "What," you may say, "so at last we find that Christianity does not primarily make its way through its appeal either to the social instincts, or to the imagination, or to the moral feelings, but to the intellect. It is after all, then, a system of individualism—a system of philosophy. You land us in dogmas, creeds, technicalities. The perfection of Christianity is at last to be found in Scholasticism!" This, brethren, is the caricature of a great truth. Creeds, scholastically-expressed creeds, have had (in the opinion of many, still have) their value as modes of expressing, protecting and transmitting truths wrapped up in them. But, of course, when we assert that the essence of Christianity lies in doctrine, we do not so much allude to the technical form into which the necessities of controversy from time to time have thrown it, as to the definite doctrine (aye! and definite

system of doctrine) which lies behind the form. We claim for Christianity that its root and strength as an institution, as a ritual, as a dogma, lies at last in the supernatural, in the direct and real revelation from God unveiled in it; in the heaven-sent charter of truth deposited in its sacred books, the direct message from the throne. And if, accordingly, we now ask ourselves what is the outline of doctrine, what the truths which constitute our sacred deposit, the answer is not hard to find. Run over the calendar of the Church's year; look at the doctrines embodied in the order of her Services; and we shall find an answer provided for us.

It is well known that the Services of the first half of the year bring before us doctrine, a series of pictures of the great historic events which embody doctrine, and that the latter half brings before us duties, as if to show that duty must be preceded by, and rest upon, Christian faith; and in this array of doctrines the central thought is a plan of human salvation; for the great thoughts brought before us are the twofold work,—the work of the Atoner, and the work of the Sanctifier. In truth, we may consider that three aspects of doctrine emerge prominently to view, embodied respectively in the Christmas, the Easter, and the Whitsuntide Cycles. These doctrines might be shown to be the centre of the Christian revelation. In the very few words which I now propose to speak concerning them, it

will be more useful to glance at them rather in their practical aspect as the supply of the world's needs; for here we may find the principles which give us hope that by missionary work Christianity will find a lodgment in the hearts of men of all time, and which, amid the supposed decay of some portion of the Christian evidences, and the anarchy which throws a gloom over faith in the future success of our religion, may offer ground of perpetual and unassailable security.

For let us look where we may in the world present, or the world of past history, or let us search our own spirits, and we find two deep wants written in the heart of the human race, for which we claim that our religion provides satisfaction, *viz.* the desire to find God *near*, and to find God *merciful*. The world asks for a *personal* object of worship; and cries out for deliverance from the ever-present sense of *guilt*. It is the first of these wants which is the ground of *idolatry*; the second, the basis of *sacrifice*. Whatever theory we hold about the original source of these ideas, if even we accept that curious and suggestive account of the congenital origin of such primitive conceptions lately put forth by English psychology, yet the fact of their general prevalence is indisputable.

The longing to find God near, is seen alike in the lowest and highest phases of civilization; being closely connected with the consciousness of dependence, which has been regarded as the root-idea of

religion. We may suspect it in the rude savage when we see him, when brought into contact with powers over which he has no control, deifying the power, and calling in the aid of rude sculpture to form for himself a type of the God after whom his soul is unconsciously yearning. We may detect this process with more certainty in the history of one of the early races of the world. The Indian poetry of the Vedas seems to allow us to catch sight of that Aryan population, as the mind passed from a dim sense of power into Nature worship, and thence, through idol worship, into a hieratic and priestly system. Is it hard to see what would be the remedy for this idolatry, for this inability to gain or retain a belief in personality, when the mind attained to a conception of abstract power? I answer, the remedy would be in the Infinite clothing itself in the finite, the God of nature condescending to come down to this insignificant planet; God becoming flesh; God as a personal object of worship; as truth for eye and mind and heart; God manifesting Himself and vesting Himself with the sympathy of man; an inhabitant of the worlds invisible and visible; Lord of that world, Saviour of this. That this, which was supplied in Christianity, was the true remedy, we can see both negatively and positively; negatively, by the abortiveness of the most spiritual of ethnic religions—Buddhism, through the want of the idea of the personality of God; and positively, in this being

the training (as we maintain in spite of some recent criticism) afforded by Providence to the Jews. Christianity showed itself as the everlasting satisfaction of this yearning to find God nigh. The Incarnation showed God drawing nigh to earth. In the language of St. Leo, "True God was born, dignifying humanity, not abating divinity. Humility was assumed by majesty, weakness by strength, mortality by eternity." The Resurrection was the indubitable pledge that an intercourse had been opened between heaven and earth. In the Ascension, Jesus went on high: God in the nearness of His presence and the might of His greatness, but man in the tenderness of His sympathy.

It is this which is the first doctrine which makes Christianity a medicine for the healing of the nations. But Christianity not only exhibits God as near, but also God as merciful. It satisfies the deep sense of misery which attends upon the consciousness of alienation from God; it relieves the uneasiness which longs to bridge over the tremendous chasm which separates men from God. It is this feeling which has caused men in all ages to seek for some prop outside themselves, some fulcrum on which to repose their trust, some mediator who should rejoin earth to heaven. And so they have offered sacrifices, partly as gifts to God, partly as self-dedication, partly with the mysterious feeling of vicarious substitution. Now, whatever is the meaning of this rite of sacrifice, whether it existed

naturally or was a relic of primeval religion, or was divinely ordained, it represents the instinctive longing for rest, the prayer as it were for peace, which found its meaning in the death of Jesus Christ. It matters not for our present purpose what view we may take of the atoning work of Christ; whether we view it, as the early fathers did, as the means of rescuing man from the dominion of evil and the evil one; or whether we follow the pious argument of the saintly Anselm (dear in memory to the English student, dearer here where we stand within a few feet of his grave), and regard it as he did, as the means of reconciling God to man; or whether we take the view more prevalent in modern times, and regard it as appealing to human sympathy and reconciling man to God; yet look at it in which way we may, in its aspect Satanward, Godward, Manward; in each we see that the work of Christ is the relief for the sense of human guilt, as we just now saw that His person was the object of human faith.

But in this meditation on the office of the Divine Son we have not exhausted the measure of God's love, or expressed the full ground on which we profess unwavering faith in our religion, and place hope in the success of missionary labour. If the Christmas of our religion embodies one great class of doctrines; if the Passiontide and Easter embody a second, there remains the third great class commemorated in the Whitsuntide which we have lately kept. The work

of Christ—the incarnation, the passion, the resurrection, the ascension of Christ—was the means of securing the gift to man of the divine influences of the Holy Ghost. The yearning for purity of soul, for assimilation to the divine nature, is generally posterior in development to those two impulses which crave to find God near and God merciful. It presupposes them satisfied. For they rest on fear, and are partly selfish: this on love, and is unselfish. Yet for this as for those there is in some sense a witness in the human heart. There is a deep unrest in man, a deep sense of slavery under evil, a yearning after a lofty ideal without the power to attain it. Many a heathen spirit as well as a Christian disciple, has in some sense felt, as it were in dumb agony, the groaning under evil which St. Paul expressed in the 7th of Romans. It is liberty for these captive souls, victory over inward evil, which the Holy Ghost alone can impart. It is the holiness of heart which He works in those who rest their souls in penitent faith on the love of God the Father and the work of God the Son, which constitutes the holiness of Christian saints, and which forms the Christian ethics developed from Christian doctrine.

It is impossible to pursue this subject further. I name it now merely to complete the rapid survey of the great doctrines which we claim as the sacred treasure in our religion, the holy of holies of our common Christianity. Yet before finally quitting

this point, I would venture respectfully, but earnestly, to express the doubt, especially in the presence of many brother clergymen, whether there is not a slight danger in the present day of allowing the work and office of the Holy Spirit in the heart, to drop in some degree out of sight, and so far our own religious life to be injured, and with it both our moral usefulness at home, and our faith in the usefulness of missions abroad, to be weakened: The declaration of the "whole counsel of God" demands as loyal and full a recognition of the work of the Sanctifier as of the work of the Incarnate Atoner. All devout minds, indeed, must feel it to be a cause of unmingled gratification that amid the Babel of conflicting opinions within the Church and outside it, there is so large a recognition of the work of the Son of God, so marvellous an improvement compared with the feelings of other ages, as seen in the fact that Christian thought occupies itself eminently on the central fact of Christian history, the central character of the Christian revelation. One school of thought, it may be, fixes its mind mainly on the *person* of Christ, a second on the *work* of Christ, a third on the *example* of Christ; yet differ as they may, they exhibit one common bond of faith, one common object of love in their common devotion to one Christ. But is there not, in this very concentration of thought, a danger that we may unwittingly let fall into the background the study of the persona-

lity, the attributes, the influence and the work of the Third person of the blessed Trinity which forms the especial gift conferred on the Christian Church, the special truth laid bare in the ripest books of the Christian dispensation? To name the subject will be sufficient for conscientious men. Let us not, in emphasizing the holy Gospels, throw out of view the Epistles, nor forget that Church history bears its witness from the time of Augustin downwards, to the fact that those ages and men have been most marked by practical piety, and characterized by pastoral earnestness, which have most deeply pondered and proclaimed to others the moral influences of the Holy Ghost in the conversion and sanctification of Christian men. Aye! and (thank God) present experience, in the case of the few earnest men of our own time whom God has lately stirred up in our Church as missionary preachers on the growth of the spiritual life, confirms the truth.

Here, then, in this group of mysterious doctrines, we find that especial feature of our religion for which we have long searched. We claim that Christianity, as an *institution*, as a *ritual*, as a *life*, is grounded in *doctrine*; each derives its power from a source outside itself. They point us to the mysterious, to the supernatural. All derive their power from the revealed truth on which they hang. Unfashionable as this view may be in the present day, when so many earnest and loving spirits are seeking truth in some one of those positions which

we have rejected; humiliating as it may seem to human reason, and contrary to the tendencies of modern life, to make such a demand for the acceptance of the supernatural and such a concession that our doctrines must ultimately rest on faith, not on reason; on divinely revealed truth, supported occasionally by reason, but not discoverable by it; on the Bible and Christian history, not on the processes of induction; yet to this at last we are driven if we would hold the faith once delivered to the saints, and if we wish that the Christianity which we spread by missions be the immemorial doctrine of the Church of our Lord. The discoveries of science, the assaults of criticism, may undoubtedly challenge parts of our belief, and may demand the revision of it, the surrender (as it were) of the outworks of the Christian fortress; yet the central doctrines of our faith on which we repose, we must maintain as the citadel which cannot be surrendered except with our lives. It is in the exquisite suitability of the divine truth to the wants of man, and in the yearning of the heart of man for that truth (some aspects of which we have considered), that we must find the permanent ground for believing that Christianity will find a future in the world's history, and gradually draw all men to itself. It is on this ground that we may not only love our religion, but have faith in its truth, hope in its future. It is by this means that we must support ourselves if, in some moment of ill-success

and distress, we show the Baptist's fretful doubt. If we repiningly ask, "Art thou He that should come?" let our souls listen to the rebuke of Providence, "Go and tell John the things that ye have seen and heard." Yes! the work of Christ is going forward, though it may not move according to our preconceptions, and though Providence, or "the fatalism of things," as it is sometimes called, may see fit to make use of other plans than ours, of other instruments than us, to work out its ends. In our home-work as missionaries in our little spheres, we may act with unquenchable faith, assured that we are scattering the seed of a future harvest of righteousness; and as we show our sympathy this day with the act of sending out another bishop to a colonial settlement, to labour for Christ and for the Church, we may send him forth with joy as a soldier going to struggle in a cause for the success of which we have abounding hope.

And here we may fitly close our meditation. For nothing remains, brethren, but that we offer our devout prayers to Heaven on behalf of him who is to be admitted this day to the highest ministry of the Church. In the difficulties of a new position, what can be his safeguard and solace but the purifying, elevating, comforting influences of the Holy Ghost? We may, indeed, be certain that he will be spared difficulties which have beset some of our colonial and missionary prelates. He can never be called in his sphere of work to encounter the mis-

sionary perils of the martyr Bishop of Melanesia, nor the harassing distraction which called forth an indomitable vigour and heroic courage from the metropolitan of South Africa, which make him worthy to be ranked with the African Cyprian; but if his trials may not be of this manifest and public kind, they will be in their degree real and pressing. When he lands on a strange soil, and meets with the cold indifference, the heart of the stranger to greet him, and has to encounter the difficulty of choosing friends who will give him a true view of things, and needs a clear judgment almost akin to a discerning of spirits, and the moral nerve to root out abuses and to administer the government of the Church, with mingled suavity and firmness; when, palsied with the spiritual deadness round him, he wants to maintain the spiritual-mindedness which alone can make his presence the means of drawing man into greater nearness to God; when, amid the doctrinal indifference which the Pelagianism of the human heart always has a tendency to create, he needs constantly for his soul the piercing vision of the truth of God, and the undying spirit of self-sacrifice, where shall he find his strength but in God's love, in Christ's sympathy, in the Holy Spirit's promised presence? That Spirit will assuredly be given in abundance for all his needs in answer to prayer; and we, my brethren, may, in some degree, aid this day in that sacred object by our prayers. The subject of inter-

cessory prayer is often made to appear ludicrous by scepticism or by the indiscreet mode in which the doctrine is stated; nevertheless a believer in revelation will not allow himself to doubt that prayer, especially for spiritual help, travels aloft to the throne of God, and brings down answers of abounding blessing for others as well as ourselves. The Church at Antioch commended even a Paul and a Barnabas to the grace of God before sending them forth on their missionary journey. And in like manner the humblest of us, who to-day breathes up to the Father of Spirits one hearty prayer, or who shall hereafter, day by day, breathe up one prayer as his thoughts travel after the friend whom he now commends to the grace of God, may be the blessed means of causing "a great door and effectual" to be opened for the gospel of Christ, and of causing his friend to be made by God's mercy a polished shaft in the Almighty's quiver in the great battle of life against death, and of good against evil.